



## STATE OF MICHIGAN

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### **Lawmakers applaud action to open key segment of snowmobile trail from Gaylord to Cheboygan**

**LANSING** – The Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund rescinded the non-motorized trail designation on the West Mullet Lake Trail Wednesday, announced Sens. Jason Allen and Tony Stamas along with Rep. Kevin Elsenheimer.

The lawmakers received verbal confirmation from DNR Chief Deputy Dennis Fedewa.

“This is great news for Cheboygan, Indian River and other communities along the trail,” said Allen, R-Traverse City. “We have been focusing on this project for years and this is a big step in the right direction. After years of gridlock and unworkable alternatives, it is great to see a solution developing that will greatly boost winter tourism for the area and create jobs.”

A task force studying how to establish a snowmobile trail between Gaylord and Cheboygan was created to look at alternatives to the West Mullet Lake section. At the request of the workgroup, the lawmakers sponsored two measures that were passed by the Legislature – most recently Public Act 307 of 2005, which allows snowmobiles to be operated within the right-of-way limited access highways. Unfortunately, an earlier version of PA 307 was vetoed by the governor.

In addition to the workgroups deliberation, Allen, Stamas, Elsenheimer and other lawmakers have held committee hearings, met with DNR officials and written letters to the governor in an effort to bring resolution to this problem.

“We’re extremely happy that the administration has responded to our letters and verbal communications with the governor about the importance of resolving this issue,” said Elsenheimer, R-Bellaire. “I don’t care who gets or claims credit for making this happen, I think everyone will agree that northern Michigan will benefit from this decision - it will have a profound impact on our winter tourism season up north.”

According to Fedewa, the action still requires further approval by the Natural Resources Commission to permit motorized use and authorize any conditions (speed restrictions, safety precautions) they may deem necessary.

At the next scheduled meeting, according to Fedewa, the NRC is likely to deliberate on this action item and the issue will expedited.

“We’ve worked hard at making a snowmobile trail linking Gaylord and Cheboygan a reality,” said Stamas, R-Midland. “If the Natural Resources Commission acts on this and allows motorized vehicles on the trail it could have a significant impact on the economy of northern Michigan.”

With almost 400,000 registered snowmobiles, the industry contributes more than \$1 billion to the state’s economy every year. Michigan has more than 6,000 miles of groomed trails offering exciting terrain of forest and field to both residents and visitors.